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THE BAROQUISM OF GRACIAN'S
«EL ORACULO MANUAL»

THERE are two Baroquisms or attempts at making the Baroque mannered in order to vary a long used form for lack of really new ideas. The one is a conceptistic amplification of old ideas made interesting by odd formulations and heavy allegories, but leading to the absolute exhaustion of the Baroque. The other is a witty condensation by elegant ironies which lead to something new, a cerebral criticism of the metaphysical and emotional aspects of baroque wisdom. This second Baroquism culminates later, mainly in France, in a literature of esprit and gracefulness. The Spanish way, even in Calderón and Quevedo, was primarily the heavy Baroquism, which the art historians would call Churriguerismo and which in the long run, disliked in Spain, and made ridiculous, as far as literature is concerned, in the *Fray Gerundio* of Padre Isla, found its real acceptance and triumph only in the art of Latin-America. But Gracián knew also about the second Baroquism of elegant *Agudezas* and *Caprichos* which later came into the open in the art of Goya, called in this final form Rococo.

Gracián actually knew of both baroquistic extremes. Theoretically he distinguishes in his *Agudeza y Arte de ingenio* between the baroquistic amplification as un *estilo redundante, hinchado, asiático, exagerado, dilatado, de extensión*, and the baroquistic condensation as un *estilo conciso, precisado, lacónico, apuntado, ajustado, de intención*¹. Practically he has used the first largely for his *Criticón*, the second mainly for his *Oráculo Manual*. It is not difficult to assess by general considerations that the baroquism of this *Arte de prudencia* is factually the first and the only Spanish contribution to the Pre-Rococo. First of all these three hundred condensed and elegant aphorisms were recognized as close to the French genuine Pre-

¹ José Manuel BLECUA, «El *Criticón*» de Gracián, Zaragoza: Archivo de filología Aragonesa, Serie B. I, 1945, p. 18.

Rococo by Madame de Sablé² and La Rochefoucauld³ who partly translated, partly adapted, partly developed them. Second, they were translated into French during the Rococo period (1684-1765) no less than twenty times⁴. Third, Miguel Romera-Navarro, the critical editor and commentator characterizes Gracián's 228 original epigrammatic statements and 50 condensations (besides twelve reproductions) from the *Discreto*, *Héroe* and *Político* as models of *claridad*, *estilo conciso*, *expresión lacónica*, *parquedad en los epítetos*, a characterization which to a certain extent would cover any French Rococo production⁵. He even links Gracián to Voltaire for his «desprecio del hombre» and for his «ironías (que) surgen en medio de una materia grave como chispas que la abrillantan»⁶. Finally Gracián himself tells us in some of his aphorisms of wordly wisdom that saying things with elegant clarity (*declaración*), facility in the expression (*desembrazo*) and gracefulness in the idea (*despejo en el concepto*) is his very ideal (Aforismo 216) as it would be for instance the ideal of Montesquieu. Or he tells us that his ideal is «palabras de seda... para ser amable» (Aforismo 267) i. e. actually the fascinating rococo smoothness which prefers the light silk to the heavy baroque velvet.

But let us see for ourselves which are Gracián's stylistic means in detail to bring home to the readers of the *Oráculo* «esa calidad casi telegráfica de su técnica de comunicación... (de) una suma de mundanidad refinada»⁷, «su marcado aristocrático e intelectuálismo»⁸ and all those «pre-rococo» qualities which Miguel Romera-Navarro has found already in the corrections of *El Héroe*: *conciación*, *propiedad*, *precisión*, *claridad*, *variedad*, *viveza*, *densidad*, *brio*, *elegancia*, *gracia*, *distinción*, *brillantez*⁹. Gracián's stylistic means are either forms of *esprit* which is a little more than merely *agudeza*, *acutezza*, or *pointe*, or forms of elegance which mainly comprise condensation, ellipsis, lightness in the sentence, pregnancy in the word classes and slight but frequent asymmetries and dissonances which take any pedantry or heaviness out of the baroque proportions, parallelisms, concordances and systematic counterbalances.

² Graydon HOUGH, «Gracián's *Oráculo Manual* and the *Maxims* of Mme de Sablé» *Hispanic Review* IV (1936), 69-72.

³ H. A. GRUBBS, «The Originality of La Rochefoucauld's *Maxims*», *Revue d'histoire Littéraire de la France* XXXVI (1929), 49-55.

⁴ *L'Homme de cour par B. Gracián. Maxims traduites de l'Espagnol sur l'édition originale de 1647 par Amelot de la Houssaie (1684)*, ed. André Rouveyre, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1924, p. VII.

⁵ Baltasar GRACIÁN, *Oráculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia*. Edición crítica y comentada por Miguel ROMERA-NAVARRO. Madrid: CSIC, 1954, p. XVII.

⁶ M. ROMERA-NAVARRO, *Estudios sobre Gracián*, The Univ. of Texas Press, 1950, pp. 28 and 63.

⁷ Carlos LACALLE, *Aragón, Fernando el Católico y Gracián*, Zaragoza: Instituto Cultural Hispánico de Aragón, 1951, pp. 14-15.

⁸ María Angélica BITHORN, *Baltasar Gracián. Sus Ideas sobre la Conversación*, Tesis Mexico: Univ. Nacional Autónoma, 1952, p. 72.

⁹ Miguel ROMERA-NAVARRO, *Estudio del autógrafo de «El Héroe» Graciano (Ortografía, Correcciones, Estilo)*, Madrid: RFE, Anejo XXXV, 1946, pp. 196-218.

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The first move towards the aristocratic *esprit* is the rejection of any wordplay that is not meaningful so that even the word-play becomes a highly intellectual play with *conceptos*. A good example is Gracián's superior translation of Marcial's antithesis «Qui fingit sacros vultus... non facit ille Deos: qui rogat, ille facit» by «No haze el numen el que lo *dora*, sino el que lo *adora*» (Aforismo 5). What Greeks, Romans and the Bible said seriously without any playfulness, is constantly repeated by Gracián in an adage-sound-play. Life as a fight against evil, at the same time implying «Homo homini lupus» is rendered by:

Milicia es la vida del hombre contra la *malicia* del hombre (13).
Similarly:

La condición del *amante* tiene la mitad del *diamante* (di-amante) en el durar (173).

La brevedad gana por lo *cortés* lo que pierde por lo *corto* (105). Gracián takes up the idea of the greater importance of the *armas* compared to that of the *letras* by a playful synecdoche full of *ingenio* which implies however the indispensability of the *letras*:

Hase de alargar la mano de la *hoja* (blade) a las *hojas* (sheets of paper) (40).

Thus Gracián's particular *forte* is the semantic ambivalence of the same word which always leads to intelligent formulas:

No todos los que *ven* (perciben) han avierto los ojos, ni todos los que miran, *ven* (distinguen) (230).

Hacer *artificio* (engaño) del no *artificio* (sinceridad) (13).

Es *arte* (destreza) ir contra el *arte* (preceptos) (66).

El ruin no entiende los *terminos* (palabras) del buen *termino* (modo de portarse) (272).

Nacemos para *saber* (ciencia) y *sabernos* (conocimiento de sí mismo) (229).

Por huir la *afectación* (falta de sencillez) dar en ella *afectando* (fingiendo) el no *afectar* (hacer ostentación) (123), typical device of a *discreto* as also the following:

No servirá el *picarse* (preciarse) uno sino de *picar* (estimular) el gusto (145).

With greater ingenuity word-plays with stress on the meaning are based on an ambiguous literal and metaphorical sense at the same time:

El que ligeramente se movió (1. marchó despacio, 2. se excedió) hállase después corrido (1. corriente, 2. avergonzado) (154).

¹⁰ Gabriel JULIÁ ANDREU, ed., Baltasar Gracián. *Tratados Políticos*, Barcelona: Miracle, 1941, p. 12.

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Lo más dificultoso del correr (1. moverse de prisa, 2. entrar en ira)) está en el parar (1. detenerse, 2. salir de la ira) (155).

Uno corre (entrá en ira) tal vez en breve rato para correrse (aver-gonzarse) después toda la vida (207).

The double meaning may also concern a substantive and its derivative:

Fué la luz (inteligencia) pronto lucimiento (alarde) de todo lo criado (277).

Perderse en un punto (a causa de) de un puntillo (cuestioncilla) (172).

or a word and its compound:

No dezir (responder) al contradezir (contradictor) (279).

Ai vulgo y revulgo (vulgo de las clases superiores) que es peor (206).

Saber ceder (conformarse) es exceder (superarse) (220).

or better still its sham-compound:

Toda tema (obstinación) es postema (absceso) (218).

Da pie el que se pica (desazona) a que le repiquen (toquen las campanas para él) (241).

The second tendency of sharpness is balancing of the concrete with the abstrac. It is so often at the bottom of the conceptistic sense-play, that it may be come an *agudeza* by itself, i. e. without word-play implications. It moves in the direction of personification of objects but hinders too sharp a visualización, remaining in the realm of the spirit. It comes close to a rather French propensity of the mind, although the Spanish linguistic material is not abstract enough on the whole to warrant here a full identification. None the less, this balacing as it occurs here, relatively speaking, works like a rococo device and may be compared to those famous ornaments which are half shell, half branch.

The simplest case is given by the personifications of abstracts with the aid of a concrete verb:

La privación espoleará el deseo (150).

No se roza (rae) la decencia (dignidad) (33).

La imaginación pinta las cosas (182).

Pelea de sagacidad con estratagemas (13).

Que riñan las pendencias de la dificultad (15).

Sale descalabrada la reputación (25).

Rompa el espejo la belleza (110).

Alteza de animo rebienta por campear (128).

Cásase la imaginación con el deseo (19), see also 16, 30, 51, 96, 227.

Es munición de discretos la cortesana erudición (22).

Es un vómito para los secretos la tibieza en el creer (213).

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An abstract substantive in the plural or a neuter pronoun form leans so much towards the concrete that they may assume a series of drastic concrete verbs and verbal locutions:

Atropellándose *las dichas* corren riesgo de deslizar y dar al traste con todo (38).

Tomar a pechos lo que se ha de echar a las espaldas (121).

There are half-metaphorical, often appositional phrases such as: el clarín de la fama (75), el espejo de la atención (256), el oído, puerta de la verdad (80), recogedores de las inmundicias de voluntades (140), coxos de voluntad y de juicio (248).

Finally there are half-metaphorical locutions, since Gracián tones down the concrete ones existing in the language by abstract additions:

echar la capa al toro de la envidia (83); calzarse el juicio al revés (221, 268); caminar al mediodía de la luz de la razón (91); tomar el pulso a los empleos (104), a los negocios (136), al ánimo (148); desenterrar hediondez pasadas (114); dejar por dentro la llave del recato (279); ir una conversación en chapines de entono (141); ir siempre zevando la admiración (212); despertar la desdicha quando duerme (254).

The method of this concrete-abstract balancing which concerns all word-classes appears shrewdest where a brilliant and striking analogy, parody or allusion to a well known proverb or refrán has been intended but an abstract idea, quite different from the proverbial expression, rests in the concrete ideogram which at the same time contains elements from other contexts of popular sayings and thus represents itself a virtual proverb:

La naranja exprimida cae del oro al lodo (5) evokes: El poco hablar es oro, y el mucho lodo (Refrán), but suggests with the help of another phrase symbolically an exploited and then rejected friendship.

Al león muerto hasta las liebres le repelan (54) evokes: Muerto el león, las liebres le andan al rededor (Refrán), but means: one should avoid this symbolic situation for one's dignity.

No ai burlas con el valor (54) evokes: No hay burlas con el amor (Dicho popular), but as a proportional allusion, it tries to outdo a well stated wisdom by a new casuistry.

No basta tener razón con cara de malicia (99) evokes: No basta ser una honrada, sino parecello en trato y cara (Refrán), but generalizes a saying about feminine chastity into a highly political adage, cynically expressed in its density.

Todo honrador es honrado (118) evokes: Honra a quien te honra, y ganarás más honra (Proverbio), but appears in its condensation more proverbial than the proverb itself.

Con el buen entendedor basta brujulear (sugerir) (210) evokes: Al buen entendedor pocas palabras (Proverbio), but is a more concrete interpretation.

The proverbial concrete-abstract analogies do not fulfill as yet, however, that «sutileza maliciosa, crítica, intencionada (que) todo superior gusto estima» (*Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, Disc. XXVI), since the variation of the main allusion intended is not so farfetched that the reader would not be aware of it immediately. Gracián wants the subtlety of his readers tested by much more remote allusions. This is a third tendency of his esprit:

Thus when he says: Con el docto, docto y con el santo, santo. Gran arte de ganar a todos (77), he wishes his readers to feel echoed I Cor. IX, 22: Factus sum infirmis infirmus. Omnibus omnia factus sum, ut omnes facerem salvos.

When he says: Sacará sangre por leche el que esquilmaré... (82), he wishes his sentence to be recognized as the translation of *Prov.* XXX, 33: Qui vehementer emungit, elicit sanguinem.

He also purposely distorts and condenses quotes in the manner of Sancho so that the reader needs the original to assess the wit. Thus out of *Mat.* VII, 3: Quid autem vides festucam in oculo fratris: et trabem in oculo tuo non vides?, he distilates quite another sense: tal exageración que de los átomos hazen vigas para sacar los ojos (109).

He puzzles by the mixture of three of the beatitudes *Mat.* V, 4: Beati mites, quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram, V, 9: Beati pacifici, quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur, and V, 10: Beati, qui persecutionem patiuntur... quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum, when he makes the statement: No sólo viven los pacíficos, sino que reinan (192).

This condensation of different ideas into a new one, also outside the biblical sphere, is often a very pleasant ingenuity where the *concepto* seems easily reached but was reached in the most artificial way, e. g.

Es la almohada sibila muda (151), with the meaning that sleeping over a problem may give a mature solution like an oracle. The expression actually is the shortened comparison of the locution «consultar con la almohada» telescoped with the

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non-fully-formulated expression «consultar con la Sibila délfica»). This foreshortening through *agudeza* certainly is brilliant.

Woe to the *non-ingenio* who has not read Garcilaso de la Vega's third *Egloga* with the Springwind called *Favonio*, bringing to blossom all the flowers. He never will decipher the most simple parallel: *Es la estimación para las perfecciones lo que el favonio para las flores* (67).

Thereader who has forgotten that Lucina is the olympic midwife will stumble over the simplest statement: *La prudencia es Lucina de la felicidad* (64).

Fascinated by the refranes like any other Spaniard, Gracián did not overlook that refranes are teasing with their rimes and assonances. Thus he is constantly tempted to comment on his own aphorisms with refranlike built maxims. He spread over his *Oráculo* a network of teasing pseudo-refranes. In this way, almost against his cerebral sophistication, he continued the sound-conditioned-propensities of the baroque echoes and the Isidorián style tradition of Spain. Thus we distinguish a fourth trend in this pre-rococo style: soundbridges which convey to the reader a witty charm. None the less, the accent is shifted here from witticism to elegance. This comes already to the fore in the form of Gracián's semantically important *similiter desinentia* and *cadentia* which means lightness and sweep:

Las cosas que son más para olvidadas son las más acordadas (262).
Tentaciones, mas seguro el huirlas que el vencerlas (47).
Más sagacidad es evitarlas que vengarlas (259).
Hágase confianza de la misma malevolencia (259).
Olvidar la suerte y la muerte (190).
Aplaze la novedad por la variedad (269).
Cada uno habla del objeto según su afecto (226).
No se dexé engañar de la lizonja pagándola sino condenándola (245).

Then the play with *simplex* and *compositum*, often looking like a true refrán but not being one:

Lo que luego se haze, luego se desaze (57).

The same effect comes from contrasting words with the same root or ending:

Hanse de sellar los afectos quanto más los defectos (126).
Si es sola la cordura, será tenida por locura (133), very well translated, more overtly by La Rochefoucauld, *Maxime* 231: «C'est une grande folie de vouloir être sage tout seul.»

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Romera-Navarro drew our attention to the fact that also this kind of rime reaches out to virtual refranes created by Gracián:

Más vale el buen ocio que el negocio (t247).

This rhyming receives an additional rhythm by clausulae-like similar grammatical structures preceding the rimes:

Antes con tibieza de favor que con violencia de furor (257).

Rhythm outdoes rhyme in cases like:

para ser amable ser apacible (267).

A counter-movement against the smoothly carrying soundbridges, another form of elegance, is the agudeza of a keen bluffing by successive traps of extreme semantics in the very same sentence, which means halting and restricting the speed of reading. It needs time to see that in the sentence

en en trato se ha de permitir el interior a todos (3); *trato* means «conversación», *permitir* «dejar ver» and *interior* «los pensamientos íntimos»;

that in the statement

Superioridad redime de peregrinas vulgares impresiones (8); *peregrino* means «pasajero» and *vulgar* «común»;

that in the reflection

Deven a sus patrias que cupo allí más favorable el cenid (9); *caber* means «corresponder» and *zenit* «cielo»;

that in the experience

Sutileza fué de prodigios inventar rumbo nuevo para las eminencias (63); *sutileza* means «perspicacia», *prodigios* depends on *rumbo nuevo* and means «modelos» and *eminencia* means «celebridad».

The semantic clashes (with a new agudeza) may be underlined by the clash of sounds, as in the sentence:

Sea el proceder real dentro de los límites de su cuerda suerte (103); where *real* means «digno de un rey», *suerte* «estado, condición» and *cuerdo* «considerado atentamente».

If we ask ourselves why we accept without revolt this provocative maze of individual semantics, the answer probably will be because of the elegance resulting from a refined condensation of word-combinations. Of course, here the pregnancy does not reach the theoretical ideal of Gracián: El estilo natural como el pan que nunca enfada (*Agudeza*, Disc. LXII). We must, however, consider that the single words severed from their combinations and occurring in the context are no semantic *hapax legomena* but belong to the Gracianesque fundamental vocabulary which contains meanings recurrent throughout the *Oráculo*, and representing in themselves, despite some ambiguity, the same elegant arbitrary semantic condensations which sprang from

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their combinations. Let us select a typical list going through the *aporismos*, trusting the interpretations of Romera-Navarro:

<i>punto</i>	punto de perfección (1, 6, 39)
<i>persona</i>	hombre de capacidad (1, 108)
<i>genio</i>	carácter innato (2)
<i>ingenio</i>	prudencia aguda (2)
<i>lucimiento</i>	brillantez de juicio (2, 277)
<i>prendas</i>	dotes del espíritu (2, 8, 46, 277)
<i>violencia</i>	violación (16)
<i>desaire</i>	decrédito (19, 238)
<i>minerva</i>	capacidad intelectual y moral (18, 34, 196)
<i>noticia</i>	conocimiento gustoso y docto (22)
<i>advertencia</i>	consejo prudente (28)
<i>aprieto</i>	ocasión crítica (29)
<i>varilla, tiro</i>	insinuación maliciosa (37)
<i>realce</i>	cualidad excelente (34, 2, 78)
<i>intención</i>	mala intención (37)
<i>concepto</i>	reputación (40, 112, 253)
<i>héroe</i>	varon eminente (46)
<i>empresa</i>	acción digna de mote (53)
<i>nimiedad</i>	superfluidad (88)
<i>desempeño</i>	triunfo en una empresa (95)
<i>entereza</i>	rectitud y firmeza (100)
<i>desliz</i>	resbalón, trampa (191)
<i>estrella</i>	buena estrella (196)
<i>hablilla</i>	cuento mentiroso (206)
<i>sazón</i>	oportunidad (235)
<i>brújula</i>	indicio no explícito (277)
<i>defecado</i>	depurado de todo (6)
<i>culto</i>	inteligente (8)
<i>conversable</i>	comunicable en el trato social (22)
<i>exótico</i>	extravagante (301)
<i>extravagante</i>	extraordinario (801)
<i>coronado</i>	cabal y perfecto (52)
<i>civil</i>	vulgar y grosero (69)
<i>genial</i>	muy jovial (79, 275)
<i>desengañado</i>	muy prudente (100)
<i>santo</i>	virtuoso (300)
<i>diligenciar</i>	lograr trabajando (10)
<i>lograr</i>	gozar los frutos (11)
<i>rozarse</i>	tomarse libertades (50)
<i>terciar</i>	ajustar habilmente (80)
<i>discurrir</i>	hablar caprichosamente (239)
<i>despuntar</i>	pasarse de listo (239)
<i>sentir</i>	juzgar (294)

A further point of elegance, comparable to the invisible interior sense-condensation of the single word, is, as a visible exterior counterpart, the elliptic form of the sentence. In the elliptic sentence the very quintessence of the thought is retained and none the less seems to crack the same. The most frequent use of ellipses is the zeugmatic double sentence for whose second part the predicate of the first has to be supplied. But generally also a substantive, which has to be supplied from the first part, is lacking likewise. This is the type of double ellipsis by which the *Oráculo Manual* starts:

Todo está ya en su punto, y el ser persona en el mayor (1).
Hace personas la cultura, y más quanto mayor (87).

Current is the suppression of the copula:

Vitoriosa destreza corregir, o por lo menos desmentir... nacionales desdoras (9).

Nuevo género de señorío..., hazer siervos (15).

This kind of simple ellipsis ends up with proverbial coinages:

A poco saber, camino real (271).

Ciencia sin seso, locura doble (16).

But Gracián can outdo refranes by more elegant shortenings. He says: Harto presto, si bien (57) for «Harto presto se hace lo que bien se hace». Or the copula is twice suppressed, which makes the sentence still more dense:

La intensión da eminencia, y heróica, si en materia sublime (27).

Important verbs are suppressed in a more striking fashion:

Lo que se muestra de cumplida con los que vienen, de descortés con los que van (59).

Pocos llegaron a tanta gracia de las gentes, y si de los cuerdos, felicidad (124).

Impugnar (la murmuración) causa perjuizio, y si crédito, des- crédito (205).

Particularly elegant, though grammatically daring, is the following example of a *semantic ellipsis* where the decisive word (*artes*) has to be guessed from a later occurring adjective (*liberales*), after a numeral hinted, to the impossibility of supplying the first substantive expressed, *sabiduría*:

Sabiduría conversable valióles más a algunos que todas las siete con ser tan liberales (22).

One would suppose the word *cosa* suppressed in the following:

Todas las de acá son sombra de las eternas (205).

The pronominal reprise of a substantive whose repetition is badly missed adds witticism to the elegance:

Muchos por falta de sentido, no le pierden (35).

There are also elegant condensing prepositions, of course, as admit-

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ted by the language, which together with a participle, replace a whole causative clause, prototypical in the title: «El condenado por desconfiado». Thus Gracián says:

Ai hombres irremediables por inaccesibles (147).

The elliptic propensity enables Gracián to formulate elegant aristocratic *sententiae* whist, due to their aerial metaphors, place him further away from the refranes of the «vulgo y revuelgo», and in their lightness bring out best in him what Menéndez Pelayo had called «el refinamiento de la abstracción» and about which Aubrey F. Bell has stated: «In reading Gracián one realizes how Spanish was Seneca»¹¹. More than elsewhere these *sententiae* make the reader feel again the lightness of Rococo silk in which Gracián clothes his abstract ideas, in contrast to Baroque velvet.

La *cortesía* es el mayor hechizo político (40).

La *cortesía* no da, sino que empeña (272).

No ai *perfección* donde no ai defecto (elección) (51).

Son las *pasiones* los humores del ánimo (52).

No admite *probabilidades* la *cordura* (91).

La *variedad* con *perfección* es *entretenimiento* de la vida (93).

Es plausible la *galantería* (generosidad) en la *emulación* (165).

La *facilidad* es ramo de *vulgaridad* (177).

Gústase al doble de la *felicidad* penada (299).

The lightness is often pushed to epigramatic tendencies. The real epigram defined by Gracián as «concepto por ficción» (*Agudeza*, Discurso XXXV) has no room, of course, within the maximatic «Oráculo». But there is the epigramatic gesture often invested in a verb on the top of the sentence which introduces an anecdotal advice:

Anda, pues, el cuerdo mui detenido y quiere más pecar de corto que de largo (41).

Señoréase el (judicioso) de los objetos, no los objetos dél.

Sonda luego el fondo (49).

Obró mucho el que nada dexó para mañana. Augusta empresa, correr a espacio (53).

Húrtase el cuerpo airosamente con un sorriso a la más dificultosa contienda: en esto fundava el mayor de los grandes capitanes su valor (73).

The last pre-rococo device of elegance within the *Oráculo* is the slight unbalancing of the too heavy baroque *contraposti*. This occurs for instance by preferring the chiasmic order to the strictly parallel

¹¹ Aubrey F. G. BELL, *Baltasar Gracián*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1921, pp. 24 and 54.

order; but mostly there occurs an elliptical suppressing of something in the second member, or a disturbing of the parallelism by a conjunction in the second member which in most cases appears shorter than the first. This makes for real elegance:

Siempre la *superioridad* fué *aborrecida*, 13 syllables
 quanto más de la misma *superioridad* (7) 11 syllables

Or the phrasing of the contrasting members is so different that an unbalancing with *Al contrario* alone succeeds in identifying the antithesis as parallelistic:

Aquellos son amigos que hacen amistades 14 syll.
 Al contrario están otros puestos en no dar gusto (32) 4+11 syll.

Strict parallelisms are unbalanced by opposing a richly determined substantive in the first member to a bare one in the second:

Logrando lo que se dize en el aplauso con que se recibe ... 19
 y lo que se oye en el amaestramiento (11) 14

The are miniature cases where only a conjunction unbalances the parallelism:

Porque no ai // más dicha ni más desdicha: 4 + 8 with *más* + *ni*
 que // prudencia o imprudencia (21): 1 + 8 with no *más* + o

Or the non-repetition of decisive clause elements makes of the second clause a phrase:

Tener una sazonzada copia de sales en dichos 10 + 6
 de galantería en hechos (22) 0 + 9
 El atento siempre está de parte de la razón 8 + 7
 no de pasión (142) 0 + 5
 La eminencia en los hechos dura, 10
 en los dichos passa (202). 6
 La sinceridad no dé en el extremo de simplicidad ... 16
 ni la sagacidad de astucia (219). 10
 Lo malo nunca ha de contentar, 10
 pero ni comentarse (228). 7
 Con los necios poco importa ser sabio 12
 y con los locos cuerdo (240). 7

This elliptic procedure again can assume elegant chiasmic forms:
 Hazen en algunos mucho caso de lo que importa poco, 5 + 12
 y poco de lo que mucho (35). 8

Or still more condensed parallelistic structures:

Si es necio el que a quarenta años // 12 } 24
 llama a Hipócrates para la salud, 12 } +
 más el que a Séneca para la cordura (36) 13

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If there is a pure parallelism, without conjunctions added, the unbalancing is made visible by the considerable difference in the number of syllables; no matter which of the members be shorter one:

La verdad es de pocos,	7
el engaño es tan común como vulgar (43)	12
Lo que es de ventaja la simpatía con héroes,	16
es de desdoro la antipatía (46).	11
El que ayer fué el blanco de su sí,	12
hoi es el negro de su no (71).	8

The syllabic difference is less whenever the wording itself is not strongly parallel:

Nervios y guesos ai en el cuerpo:	10
no sea el ánimo todo blandura (54).	12

The same elegant disproportion characterizes equations:

Ser eminente en profesión humilde	12
es ser algo en lo poco (61).	8

Contrasts are camouflaged by introducing *y* as conjunction instead of *pero* or *sino*, but the elegance of a super-disproportion is reached at the same time by an extensive statement, opposed by an almost unbearable ellipsis:

Nadie mira al sol resplandeciente.	11
y todos, eclipsado (169)	7

or, as in the following example, together with the *y* an intended contrasting paronymy (*respira-aspira*) is camouflaged by hiding the verb *aspirar* in the substantive *espíritu* itself and replacing it by a verb (*anhelar*) non-parallel to the first (*respirar*):

Respira el cuerpo (paroxyton)	6
y anhela el espíritu (proparoxyton) (200)	9

Larger, but formally very condensed parallelisms are unbalanced by different grammatical forms of the verb (infinitive vs. gerund), negative and positive propositions, substantives expressed and substantives suggested, substantival and pronominal objects, differently stressed words, etc.:

No ser <i>eminente</i> en el empleo vulgar (oxyton)	12
por querer ser <i>mediano</i> en el sublime, (paroxyton)	12
escusa tiene de generosidad, (oxyton)	11
—	
pero contentarse con ser <i>mediano en el último</i> (proparoxyton)	16
pudiendo ser excelente en el primero (paroxyton)	13
no la tiene (18). (paroxyton)	4
—	

33

Other example of similar structure:

La mejor y más favorable (cosa),	(paroxyton)	9
— si se toma por el corte,	(paroxyton)	8
+ lástima;	(proparoxyton)	3
al contrario la más repugnante	(paroxyton)	10
+ defiende	(paroxyton)	3
— si por la empuñadura (224).	(paroxyton)	8

With the analysis of these particularly baroque forms of the *Oráculo* which we sometimes have called pre-rococo, we are far from vindicating for Spain a case of a period style which, in its full form, belongs exclusively to France. This full form is inseparable from a feminine gracefulness, boudoir-nonchalance and even eroticism for which in contrareformatory Spain all the preconditions were lacking. But that the wit, elegance and lightness of the *Oráculo* might have been a first stepping-stone to this style, it is difficult not to see. From the Spanish baroque viewpoint one may not be so sure, however, that Gracián's submitting of the more dignified baroque style to the condensation of his *agudezas* was a particular aesthetic asset.

Gracián, by making all his wordplays intellectual sense-plays, puts a strain on the reader which in the baroque e. g. Cervantine smooth change between sound-plays and cerebral witticisms was absent. If Gracián has systematically balanced the concrete with the abstract, he has deprived the natural flow of the popular as well as the learned axiomatic devices of their Baroque spontaneity and telescoped them into more ingenious than ingenuous blends. Furthermore, he has paid for the concrete-abstract units by personifications which come close to the allegories by which his broader conceptistic style is marred. With his far-fetched, more biblical than classical allusions, he falls flat, if compared to the real Gongorine cultismo-allusions which have depth and perspective. Trying to escape into the cerebral domain, Gracián slides nevertheless into the Spanish Isidorian tradition of exterior assonances, rhymes and all forms of verbal permutations and paronymies. Since these are obtained by very artificial means, they make the style much more strained than ever did the echo-plays of the Baroque. The semantics of Gracián's vocabulary is so brilliant, wishful and individual-anarchic, that the baroque discipline as to the Spanish vocabulary is certainly preferable for the reader who rejects the labyrinthian difficulties of the lexicon as hermetic and not only ambiguous. Finally, also, the elegant but drastic destruction of the baroque, harmonious *contraposti* by irregularities and dissonances of all kinds is too strained a device to be preferable even to a more pedantic baroque design of balanced parallelisms and antitheses, which were full, however, of interior paradoxes concerning the mysteries of

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life, not the shrewd conduct of life. Thus the *Oráculo*, having been made by its author purposely «uno de los textos más difíciles»¹², due to a sophisticated condensation and a prudent secularization of principles of wisdom in brilliant practical aphorisms, reveals the symptoms of the decay of the Baroque within Spain as well as the seeds for the elegant Rococo.

¹² Miguel ROMERA-NAVARRO, *Oráculo Manual*. Edición crítica, *op. cit.*, p. XIV.